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WHITE CLOUD

THE WORST PLACE
IN MINNESOTA TO
BE SOMALI



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FOOD Farewell to fine dining p. 17

MUSIC Teen rapper puts guys on notice p. 33

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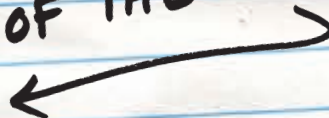
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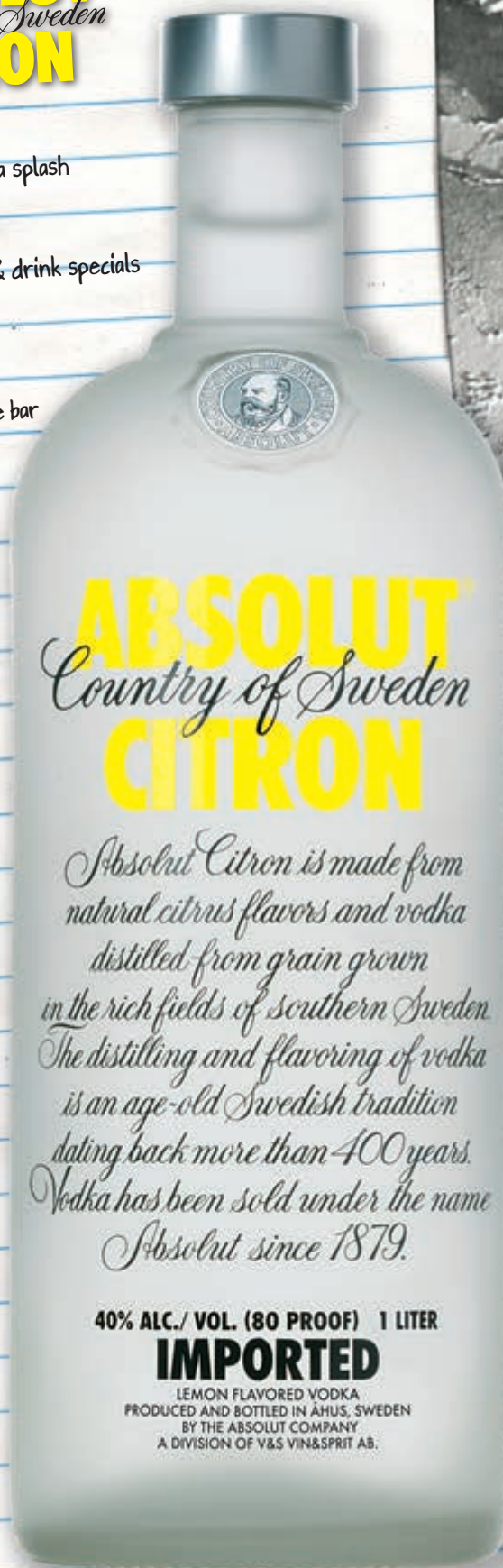
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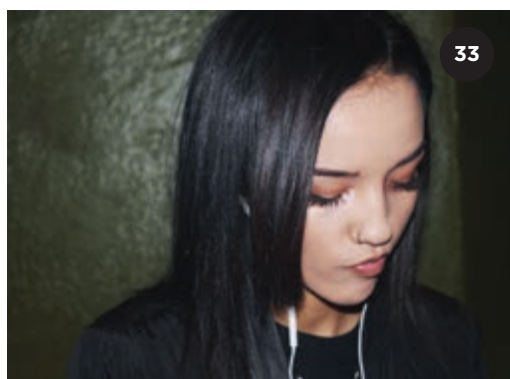
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THE SHORTLIST



First Avenue's best new bands of 2015
citypages.com/slideshows

ANNA GULBRANDSEN

RACE

\$73,600

Median income for white Minneapolis residents

\$27,950

Median income for black Minneapolitans

50%

Percentage by which black students trail white students in math and reading proficiency in the city's public schools

HIGHER ED

\$200,000

Amount per victory the University of Minnesota will pay men's basketball coach Richard Pitino this season — if he can win eight games

RUMORS

COMMON WISDOM SAYS that cities love snow emergencies. They're a golden chance to ticket, tow cars, and prey upon residents in a malevolent rampage to boost municipal coffers. But it isn't so. Take Minneapolis.

The city does make money from its impound lot. But this loot is quickly burned away by the costs of plowing, sanding, and diverting all those cops to parking duty. During one snow emergency last year, Minneapolis lost \$377,000.

So, no, the city isn't swindling you. It's just forcibly conscripting your money for its ever-losing fray with Mother Nature.

"I dig council-member Frey. He is a good guy. That said, he is totally indifferent to the plight of Funyuns."

Reader Tommy McMahon, in response to "Minneapolis councilmen seek to decriminalize minor pot possession," at citypages.com.

GOD & COUNTRY

A SECRETARY AT PRIOR LAKE HIGH was reading the Pledge of Allegiance over the intercom when she accidentally omitted the words "under God." No student complained. But the district took to Facebook to explain the error anyway, hoping to ward off an outbreak of sphincterism.

It didn't work. Atheists wrote to denounce the school for lying, promoting imaginary deities, and the general scariness of loyalty pledges. Others countered with blustery patriotism, calls for greater morality, and obligatory slurs against the "liberal media."

The kids, meanwhile, learned a valuable lesson: No matter how innocent your mistakes, the internet will always rise against you with disproportionate fury.

A GOOD COP STORY

Eagan police bring joy to three kids sent to foster care

On December 21, Eagan police went out to a motel to execute a search warrant. A man in a rental truck had been on a theft spree, jacking a snow blower and coin boxes from a car wash, among other things.

Using surveillance footage of the heists, cops tracked the truck to the motel where Timothy James Vigness and Rachele Lynn Schroeder were staying with their three kids.

“The mom and dad lived a life of crime,” says Eagan Police Chief Jim McDonald. “They were going around stealing from wherever they could.”

Officers found clothes and tools matching the thief’s, plus two bags of meth. All three kids, ages 3 to 6, had pneumonia.

Mom told police she hadn’t used in a month, though she knew the drugs were within the kids’ reach. Vigness admitted the meth was his. He also copped to the thefts as a means of funding his addiction.

With mom and dad off to jail, the young

children were sent to a foster home.

By the time Sgt. Dan Tocko came in for his shift the next day, the station was buzzing with ideas about how they could help the kids. Sgt. Jennifer Wegman started an office pool to raise money to buy them Christmas gifts. Tocko knew the Eagan Fire Department had a sweet Santa costume and was confident he could pull off St. Nick.

After raising \$550, plus another \$150 from the local Walmart, three cops hit the aisles the next day. They knew the older girls were kinda artsy. Little man was a big Spiderman guy and sorely needed a winter jacket.

On Christmas Eve, a red-suited Tocko and three uniformed cops went to the foster home to drop off gift-wrapped painting sets, a Spiderman figurine, a new coat, and other toys and groceries. The badges went in first, with Tocko Claus waiting in the car with the bag. After all, Santa’s gotta make an entrance.



When mom and dad were jailed on drug and theft charges, the cops rose to the occasion.

COURTESY OF EAGAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

“All you heard was the three kids — it didn’t matter what the adults said, they pushed them out of the way — ‘Santa!’” Tocko recalls. “It’s like that sparkle in their eye. Everything else didn’t matter.”

The kids quickly ripped open their gifts, pausing for the occasional play test while the cops hung out for a few ho-ho-hos.

A new Hot Wheels set or art supplies can’t replace mom and dad during the holidays. But when Santa showed up with a bundle of toys, Tocko says they were as excited as any other kid on Christmas.

“If that makes a difference in their lives, that’s what we’re reaching for.” —MICHAEL RIETMULDER



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The Bigotry of Bad Television

“Minnesota Nice” and the case of the tall white woman



Mike Mullen

Among industry insiders, the casting notice for a role on television is called a “breakdown.” The term never seemed more fitting than earlier this month, when a prospective TV show called *Minnesota Nice* posted a very specific casting call for its female co-host.

The show would highlight “nicer restaurants, nicer personal products, and nicer fashion.” To present all this niceness, the casting appeal sought a certain kind of woman.

She’d have no visible tattoos. She would be 5-foot-8 or above, to pair with the 6-foot-4 male co-host. She would match the show’s target audience — specifically, viewers outside the “urban” core of the Twin Cities, according to a producer’s description.

Translation: They needed a white lady.

The call for a “Caucasian” host was met with ridicule and howls of racism. “Terribly sorry that an inch of height and some tattoos will keep me from this VERY exciting white lady job opportunity,” tweeted Anna Merlan, a writer for feminist blog Jezebel.

Suddenly, it looked like the show might get killed before it even auditioned its leading ladies.

The casting call said it would appear on Fox 9. As the controversy ramped up, a national Fox spokeswoman said the show would not, in fact, be broadcast on the local station. She also distanced Fox from the scandal, saying the network had nothing to do with the production, or the demand for a towering, tattoo-free white host.

Talk about a breakdown.

People involved say the controversy is

overblown, unfair, and risked losing jobs for 10 crew members, not to mention the show’s low-melanin stars.

They’re angry. They blame one person for this mess. Me.

A story I wrote for citypages.com, highlighting the race requirement, brought the co-host call out of the safe space of an intra-industry Facebook post to a wider audience. Thus unleashed, the ever-baying hounds of online outrage did what they do.

The show’s producer, Brock Dombrovski, felt teeth at his heels and scurried. He later told me that the show was changing course, and might actually be looking for a black woman. Then he changed tone once more, saying the next guy I heard from would be his lawyer.

Others argued that some people — like me and the bloodhounds of online justice — just didn’t understand the entertainment biz. We naïve rubes wouldn’t make it five minutes in New York or L.A. After all, this is how casting works. The wizards of television and movies tailor their productions to fit an artistic vision and find an audience.

They’re not wrong. And that’s the problem. This casting plea was racism in the black, white, and blue of a Facebook post, since deleted. Even more troublesome was the inches-high bar for entry: Previous television experience was “preferred.” Whiteness was mandatory.

For better or worse — worse, probably — a culture infers its identity from who it makes famous. Non-whites can cross over to the mainstream, but only the most exceptional. Acknowledging that LeBron James, Beyoncé, or Chris Rock belong on

network television is like recognizing that a meteorite has landed on your forehead.

Only when black hacks can make it as easily as their talentless, beautiful white counterparts — only then will we be loosed of our racist past.

Representation matters, especially to little kids. Robyne Robinson, former Fox 9 news anchor, always wanted to be on TV. This made her like a lot of little girls. Unlike the white ones, she only saw a few kinds of black women on the screen. They sang, and danced, and did little else.

It wasn’t until she discovered black broadcasters like Carole Simpson, the first black woman on a national news desk, that Robinson could imagine herself onscreen. If a black woman like Simpson could give the news to white people, she could too.

“Those [broadcasters] were women I thought were remarkable,” Robinson says. “They weren’t singing, dancing, or showing off their bodies. They knew a lot about many different issues, about current events, and politics.”

Even when Robinson became that woman, she was pushing against the soft bigotry of low expectations. When she went on assignment, some subjects started talking to the camera guy, assuming he was the newsman, and she was his assistant.

Knowledge, even competence wasn’t what *Minnesota Nice* wanted. It was a lifestyle show for middle- and upper-income viewers. It sought a pretty woman to fawn over fancy products available for purchase in this great state. It needed a Vanna White, a girl-next-door type who smiled warmly as soon as the red light went on. Someone viewers could identify with.

Before cutting off communication, Dombrovski told me he wasn’t sure small-town Minnesota was ready for a non-white personality in their living room.

But it’s hard to imagine consumers so bigoted that their television time skipped past the era when millions woke up to Bryant Gumbel on *The Today Show*, and Oprah Winfrey became an industry unto herself. If those people are out there, their televisions are so old and their eyesight so poor they probably cannot tell the races apart.

I don’t have anything against white women above 5-foot-8. I live with one. But people like her don’t need any favors getting in front of a camera.

What’s wrong is when this kind of screening is done within the industry, baked into television’s recipe. A few white guys gather around a long table, a combined \$5,000 worth of shoes under the table. They order in Thai food and chat about which race viewers are most likely to believe when it comes to designer bathroom scents.

The decisions they make rule our television, and our culture. It’s time we shift the spotlight so it shines on them. ☐

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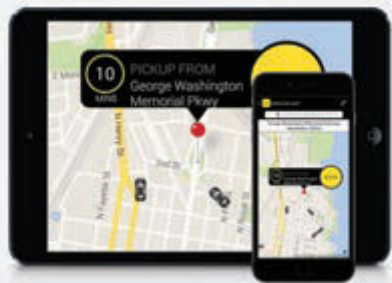
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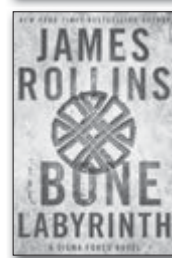
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WHITE CLOUD



Lul Hersi is raising four children in St. Cloud, where she has lived for 14 years.

PHOTO BY
GALEN FLETCHER

THE WORST PLACE IN MINNESOTA TO BE SOMALI

Lul Hersi sat in her idling minivan at a stoplight in downtown St. Cloud. Her window was rolled down to invite in the evening summer breeze, her phone tucked in her hijab, against her ear, like a makeshift Bluetooth receiver.

“Hey, you!” a woman’s voice suddenly brayed from the next car. “Hey, you! I’m talking to you, Somalian lady.”

Hersi turned to find a white woman leaning out the passenger

BY SUSAN DU

window, her eyes piercing with confrontational energy while her husband watched wordlessly from the driver’s seat.

“What?” Hersi asked.

“Are you too lazy to carry that phone in your hand?”

“Yes!” Hersi retorted without skipping a beat. “Can you come and carry it for me?”

The white woman’s smugness evaporated. She started bellowing a chorus familiar to Somalis in St. Cloud. That they had only



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Shamso Iman shares stories of bullying from Tech High School during a U.S. Department of Education forum at St. Cloud State University.

SUSAN DU

come to eat welfare. That everyone would be better off if they went back to Africa.

Hersi's preferred response, if she could help herself, was a pointed non-response — the purse of a lip, the roll of an eye. But in moments of weakness, when invective crept red-hot under her skin, she couldn't help but return fire.

"I just came from work, for God's sake!" she yelled. "I pay taxes. I think you're used to insulting people who don't talk back. Next time you attack somebody, make sure you know if they speak English or not!"

When the light finally turned green, the white woman's husband stomped the gas. Hersi was left shouting through the exhaust.

"I just went off on her," she now reflects with a sigh of remorse. "I just talked to her the way she wanted me to talk to her. But at some point you feel like, 'I need to defend myself. They'll do this to the next person they find.'"

St. Cloud has been Hersi's home for the past 14 years. Unfortunately for her, it's the worst place in Minnesota to be Somali.

WHITE CLOUD

Hersi is a divorced, single mother of four. She works as a freelance interpreter at St. Cloud Hospital. Now in her mid-40s, she inhabits a shape obscured by long dress and motherhood, adorned with a bright pink headscarf. At a Caribou in the Crossroads Mall, she sips sugary coffee with lips tinted plum.

When civil war broke out in Somalia

in the early 1990s, Hersi escaped to San Diego under the care of the International Organization for Migration. She later moved to Marshall, Minnesota, where she lived among kindly neighbors who waved and came knocking on her door bearing gently used items.

Americans, she marveled early on, would stuff their garages with the things they no longer needed. To free up space, they gave to charity.

She collected these donations for other refugees as a Lutheran Social Services volunteer. When she joined the League of Women Voters, her friends were ladies from all over the world. They wove potluck spreads of international breads, soups,

and sweets, eating over conversations about where they'd been, what they planned to do in America.

Marshall wasn't a diverse place, Hersi reflects. But it was a welcoming town, a nice town.

In 2001, her then-husband lost his job when Heartland Food Company closed. They moved to St. Cloud for new employ.

The first wave of refugees came to St. Cloud at the beckoning of Gov. Tim Pawlenty, bound for the meatpacking factories peppering the Mississippi riverbank. Their willingness to do arduous work for little pay led to friction with the unions.

But it wasn't until the 2010s that the population erupted. A community took shape. Families from all over the U.S. arrived in search of relatives. The city nicknamed "White Cloud" became 10 percent Somali. And that seemed to be the threshold where the welcome signs came down.

"IT'S SAD AND
 PATHETIC RIGHT
 NOW TO BE IN
 THIS TOWN."

"Right now it's bad," Hersi says. "It stinks. It's sad and pathetic right now to be in this town."

Graffiti began showing up on Somali storefronts. Someone plastered pornographic posters of the prophet Mohammad on light-posts.

There were days her daughters came home from school red-eyed and drained. They were targets for flying food in the lunchroom. Hallways were rampant with pushing and shoving, hijab-pulling and name-calling. It all came with persistent demands that they go back to their own country.

When Muslims in St. Cloud announced their intention to build a new mosque in 2013, the city council was flooded with thousands of comments warning that it would jam residential roads and allow terrorism to fester.

"Islam is a direct threat to our national security. They MUST be stopped," one email warned.

Read another: "If the Somalis can't accept our clothing style, our laws, our religion, then get out of Dodge."

Churches and veterans' groups took to hosting anti-refugee speakers, such as former California border patrolman Ron Branstner, who claims resettlement is a taxpayer-funded veil for corporations to traffic in slave labor, and for cunning Mus-



Natalie and Haji testify to the Minnesota Senate's legislative working group on disparities and opportunities.

GALEN FLETCHER

lims to push Sharia law on Middle America. It's a thesis faithfully nurtured by White Bear cable access host Tim Kinley, fringe blogger Ann Corcoran, Willmar podcaster Bob Enos, and St. Cloud Times columnist A.J. Kern.

Then came the rumors. In a December Facebook post shared more than 3,000 times, a woman chronicled the infuriat-

ing account of a Muslim cashier at a St. Cloud Walmart who refused to check out a Christian customer unless she removed her cross necklace. A manager allegedly doubled down on the cashier's demand.

Battling responses vacillated from dismay to skepticism to charged calls to mobilize a militia. "I find it funny how all I hear is we are supposed to accept and be toler-

ant of these fucking people when they can just shit all over us?????" one commenter wrote. "Time to lock and load and defend what's ours."

Days later, the St. Cloud Times published a fact check: both Walmarts in the city denied the incident ever happened. There were no eyewitnesses, and nothing on security cameras. The author of the rumor could not produce a name for her persecuted heroine. The original post was removed.

"With all these things going on I think, 'Lord have mercy, when we go outside let us just be safe,'" Hersi says. "You send your kids to school, but you don't know what's going to happen. I pray to God every day that they come back home safe. It's tense."

TRIPLE DISADVANTAGE

Perched on the counter at AFYA Pharmacy, Haji Yussuf looks out into the bustling parking lot of the Somali Village shopping plaza as a team of young men push a car with a dead battery out of traffic.

Haji is a longtime resident of St. Cloud, a graduate of St. Cloud State, and owner of three businesses. He recounts the brisk October morning when the owners in this swath of Somali-owned shops returned to work, only to find pig intestines coiled

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Mulki Ali and Rachael Anderson at Ali's home in St. Cloud.

GALEN FLETCHER

around the door handles, excrement smeared on the sidewalk.

"Everybody that came to this country one way or another has been intimidated and harassed, but this level of hate toward Islam, toward Muslims, it's unheard of," Haji says. "We have a big problem with that here, the pockets of discrimination."

Once, a pickup driver pulled over beside his wife as she pushed their baby in a stroller, chucked an empty water bottle at her head, and yelled at her to go back to Somalia.

On another night, Haji and his wife were speaking Somali in a grocery store when a woman turned to them, chastising, "Speak English. This is why we all hate you."

It doesn't do to dwell on it when families need feeding and the American dream needs living, Haji believes. He's concluded that the hostility is a consequence of myths about Somalis that find fertile ground in St. Cloud. Popular belief persists that refugees get free cars, free houses, free cell phones, free everything from the government. And they don't get taxed for seven years.

Haji laughs. "The first year you come to this country you get taxed," he says, clapping his fist against the ball of his palm. "It's tax, tax, tax."

The vandalism at Somali Village brought Gov. Mark Dayton to town in October. At the time, Dayton had been heavily criticized in the Twin Cities for his perceived neutrality on police killings and Minnesota's worst-in-the-nation financial gap between whites and blacks.

At the St. Cloud Public Library, Dayton spoke straight to the immigrants in a diverse crowd. "Minnesota is not like it was 30, 50 years ago," he said. "But this is Minnesota and you have every right to be here. Anybody who cannot accept your right to be here should find another state."

Some in the audience were not convinced. Whites accused Somalis of refusing to assimilate. Somalis bit back, saying whites

wouldn't accept their efforts.

One man accused the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Muslim civil rights organization, of terrorism. A pastor went fully AWOL on logic, urging unity among Americans while leaving the selfishness to the Chinese.

A demure elderly man responded to the governor apologetically. He didn't want to be labeled a racist, he said, he just wanted the right to question. What does refugee settlement cost, and how much of it falls to taxpayers?

Others blamed tensions on "outside agitators," the conservative bomb-throwers invited to town, who stoked fires of suspicion. But that didn't explain why life in St. Cloud had turned so much uglier than anywhere else.

"I'm not aware, for example, elsewhere in Minnesota where a pharmacist had his office defaced...," Dayton says. "I think there's reason for special concern for the reaction in St. Cloud."

Yet the city is not exactly comparable to the rest of Minnesota. A trip down Division Street reveals strip mall after strip mall with abandoned signs for Toys R Us, TGI Friday, Kmart, and Pizza Hurt. Some of the lowest-performing schools are here, while apartments on both sides of the Mississippi tremble in disrepair.

In 2004, plans to build an 80-mile Northstar rail line were cut in half due to limited federal funds. St. Cloud was left out, stranding commuters who hoped the train would link them to better jobs in Minneapolis. When the Vesco paper mill in nearby Sartell caught fire in 2012, hundreds of jobs were lost. The U.S. Postal Service slashed its Waite Park distribution center last year.

Through it all, St. Cloud's unemployment remained a healthy 4.3 percent, but the poverty rate is alarming. Statewide, about 11 percent live below the poverty line. In

St. Cloud, it's 25 percent.

The poverty only feeds suspicion that others — read: refugees — are getting more, better. In reality, these newcomers receive but a one-time resettlement grant of about \$1,000. And they have to repay the feds for their travel expenses within three years.

"When people are not doing well, they'll fight each other instead of fighting the top," says activist Jane Conrad. "People get angry, and they listen to these racist rumors. They wonder where the tax money goes, and even when they're told how much [refugee resettlement] costs, they don't want to believe it."

STICKS AND STONES

When Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek went to Washington last February to testify at a hearing on domestic terrorism, he gushed about the friendships blooming between law enforcement and Somali leaders in Minnesota. At the same time, he singled out St. Cloud as the city most struggling with immigration. He cited the histrionics over a plan for a new mosque in 2013.

Hassan Yussuf recalls the initial excitement of buying land in a neighborhood where many Somalis lived. The community already had three mosques, but the need

for worship space, afterschool programs, and a nursery called for another.

Opponents arrived from as far away as Bloomington to rail about traffic jams. Though Muslims tend to trickle in and out of mosques throughout the day — as opposed to Christians who assemble once a week — the city council was unmoved.

At meetings, anyone who alluded to St.

The sale went through amicably.

The original land now sits fallow, a painful reminder that there are those in St. Cloud who can't stand to have Somalis next door.

Meanwhile, rumors and accusations flew with abandon — from both sides. Last December, when the St. Cloud Times reported that the Islamic Center had its window and doors smashed in, suspicions

for reputation for prejudice, he believes.

"The United States is polarized in many ways, and race is at the top of the list," says Anderson, his drawl protracted by frustration. "Having said that, I don't know why the focus lasered in on St. Cloud, but a lot of the things that are said and written are absolutely not what's happening."

Take the young man who posted a selfie of his bruised face on Facebook in August. "Somolians got me good an they robbed me fuckin pussy ass mother fuckers," he wrote.

The man's parent echoed the post, lamenting, "We live in Minnesota where there are so many somolians it's almost like being in Afghanistan...It's time to start fighting back. If your in mn and you read this and feel the same way then messege me and let's get together and do something about these guys."

An army mobilized on social media for "hunting season." Men and women across St. Cloud vowed to posse up with pistols, stomp their Somali neighbors down, and "sink them in the river."

Then police spoke to the man behind the Facebook claims. He admitted that he'd been pissed off and drunk and that he didn't want to talk about it anymore, Anderson says. He'd indeed been whooped by someone, but Somalis weren't to blame.

"Do we have people in St. Cloud who were raised poorly and have myopic views?"

MEN AND WOMEN ACROSS ST. CLOUD VOWED TO POSSE UP WITH PISTOLS, STOMP THEIR SOMALI NEIGHBORS DOWN, AND "SINK THEM IN THE RIVER."

Cloud's historic resistance to newcomers — be they Germans, Catholics, or blacks — was immediately cut off by council president Jeff Goerger. With the exception of Councilwoman Carol Lewis, each made it clear the mosque would be rejected.

The proposal was withdrawn. Later, when a former church went up for sale, the St. Cloud Islamic Center jumped at the chance to buy it for the new mosque.

turned to anti-Muslim vandals. The Council on American-Islamic Relations demanded a federal hate crime probe.

The man arrested turned out to be a worshipper who frequented the mosque. He was drunk and frustrated from having lost his phone, police said.

Police Chief Blair Anderson has a singular loathing for unfounded gossip that swirls through St. Cloud. It's what fuels the city's

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Anderson asks. “Yes, but I can tell you the vast majority of people here and the people we come in contact with are on the opposite side of that coin. It’s just sad to me that nobody wants to talk about the good stuff that’s happening.”

THE BOILING POINT

In the spring of 2015, Tech High School staged its annual culture show. As a Somali girl performed a traditional dance, an orange flew out of the crowd, spattering her dress.

The auditorium erupted. Students fingered the culprit, a student, who they’d seen crank his arm and launch the fruit. The principal refused to discipline the boy, however. He said the room was too dark to definitively say.

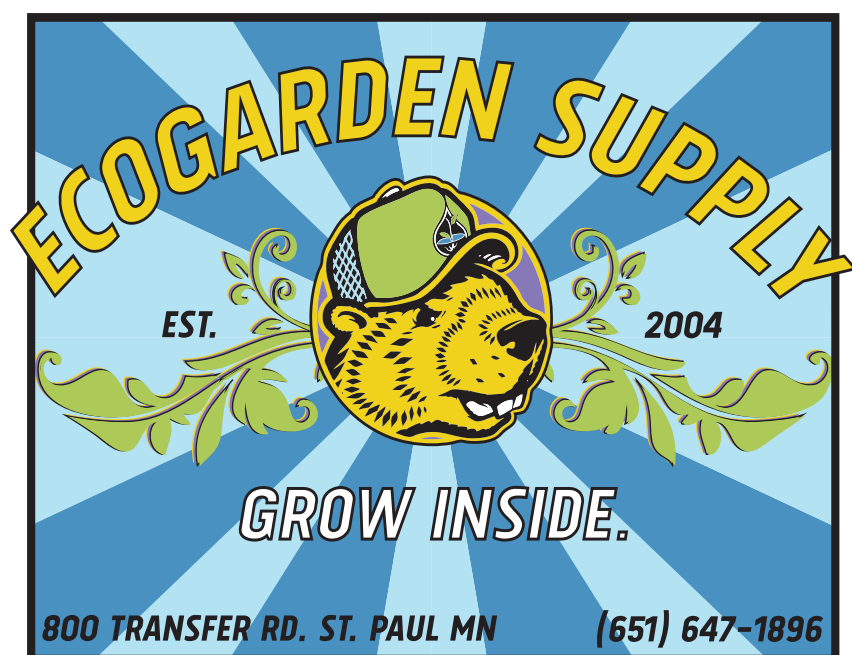
Two days later, a Snapchat photo featur-

The incident caught the attention of the U.S. Department of Education. Representatives held a forum at St. Cloud State, where public comments quickly devolved into a hysterical, finger-jabbing blame game over whose children really ran the schools, and how much St. Cloud residents paid for refugees to share their city. Some parents challenged the right of Muslim girls to wear hijabs. Whatever happened to the separation of church and state? they demanded.

Only five years prior, the Department of Education opened its first investigation of interracial fighting in St. Cloud schools. At the time, an “I hate Somalians” Facebook page curated the best insults thrown at Somali kids.

“I’m not going to say Somali students don’t bully back,” Hersi accedes. “Some retaliate. But if they come and find out that the rule of this school is peace, they will abide the law. But when they get bullied,

HERSI’S DAUGHTER HAD BEEN CALLED
A NIGGER AND A TERRORIST, TAUNTED
MERCILESSLY ABOUT HER SUPPOSED
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TURNTABLE MUSIC

ing a Somali girl in a wheelchair circulated through the school. The caption: “disabled in ISIS.”

Lul Hersi was checking Facebook before work when she saw that her daughter and a group of her friends had walked out of Tech, leading a band of Somali kids. They were fed up, believing that airing grievances to Tech administrators was like screaming into the wind. They needed someone on the outside to listen.

In her four years at Tech, Hersi’s daughter had been called a nigger and a terrorist, taunted mercilessly about her supposed dependence on welfare. Her elder sister had been barred from enrolling in AP classes because a guidance counselor assumed that English was her second language — which it wasn’t — and that she wouldn’t be able to keep up. Their friends were cornered and interrogated about the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden, and shoved down the stairs by football players.

When Hersi saw the news, she frantically called a friend to substitute for her at the hospital, her mind a storm of stress. Were police on the scene? Was her daughter going to get in trouble? Had she broken the law?

“As a concerned parent I ran,” she says. “I was trying to calm down the kids. I said don’t walk around, just stay in one place. But as I was standing there, some of the other parents were walking by insulting me, giving the kids the middle finger.”

they bully back.”

When the anger had simmered if not settled, the students returned to Tech. Later, their action would be compared to another walkout in Columbia Heights, after school board member Grant Nichols’ complained about Muslims’ “unsanitary” habits of washing their feet and armpits in bathroom sinks.

In Columbia Heights, the community rallied around the protestors. In St. Cloud, the students were on their own.

UNITECLOUD

Natalie Ringsmuth grew up in St. Cloud, moved to the Twin Cities, and returned a decade later to find her homogenous hometown had become a multiethnic city. It was just the sort of place to raise her three children, she thought. She soon found that few shared the view.

Reading through comments on the St. Cloud Times’ coverage of the Tech walkout, Ringsmuth found all the cruelest things said to Somalis aggregated in one place, barbed with the courage of anonymity.

The shame inspired her to launch UniteCloud, a blog dedicated to telling the stories of ordinary people with different backgrounds who wound up in St. Cloud. Ringsmuth also attended community meetings where many of the anti-Muslim

conspiracies were born, hoping to set the record straight.

Times columnist A.J. Kern headlined one of Ringsmuth's first excursions to one of these community meetings, which was held at the local VFW.

Kern, who had lived in Iran as a teenager, found the status of women in the Middle East so disturbing that she believed giving Somalis much latitude in the U.S. would lead to the oppression of American women under Sharia law.

After the meeting, Ringsmuth watched as a man in his 70s opened his jacket to show off three knives to a group of friends. He had a gun in his truck too. If the Koran told Muslims to slice an unbeliever in the neck on sight, he said, his job was to shoot a Muslim between the eyes.

"I just sat there dumbfounded," Ringsmuth says.

The following summer Hamza Elmi, a 6-year-old Somali boy with autism, was found drowned in the Mississippi River, a day after wandering away from home.

Ringsmuth and her husband built a memorial by the river and launched a GoFundMe to help with funeral expenses.

It was a strange and tragic time. It was also the beginning of Ringsmuth's partnership with Haji, the merchant seen as a leader among Somalis. Together, they began to visit radio stations and attend meetings where fables flourished about how Somalis came to America riddled with STDS, how they were intent upon killing Americans, and how they'd feign friendship while keeping jihad in their hearts.

In October, Haji joined Ringsmuth to hear Ron Branstner speak at Granite City Baptist Church, where the pastor Dennis Campbell was known for filling ad space in the Times with claims that "Moslems" were trying to take control of America through immigration, reproduction, drugs, and the gay agenda. Haji interrupted Branstner when the discussion moved to whether the Koran commanded violence. An older man stood up in the front row and shouted Haji down. Shut up and assimilate, he said.

"Haji has more degrees than I do," Ringsmuth responded. "He owns three businesses in this area and speaks perfect English. What more do you want him to do to assimilate?"

Still, people began to recognize the face of UniteCloud as a Muslim immigrant and a white Christian woman working together for peace. It was a sight not often seen in St. Cloud, nor easily forgotten.

HERE TO STAY

Seventeen-year-old Mulki Ali loves St. Cloud. She was born in Somalia but moved to Virginia with her parents at age four. With no other Somalis around, Ali assumed that she and her family were the only black people in America. It wasn't

until they moved to St. Cloud that her eyes opened to the greater diaspora.

Ali also loves Tech High. She's considering college after graduation, maybe joining AmeriCorps. Come what may, she intends to return to St. Cloud. Her home.

She rejects the notion that St. Cloud is more racist than elsewhere in the state — with the disclaimer that she is an extreme optimist.

"For the most part, everyone is just very unaware about other groups in our community, and it causes everyone to jump to conclusions and behave in ways they wouldn't have behaved if they'd just gotten to know the person."

Ali views the walkout as an explosion of unspoken frustrations that had, for a moment, defeated Tech. She has high hopes now for the long, intensive, and often awkward conversations the administration set up after tensions finally burst.

Nowadays, Tech is still segregated, Ali says. The cafeteria is dotted with cliques of like-skinned students. She's lucky, she thinks, to be part of one of the few mixed groups.

"For me, I just have a short attention span, and having the same old conversation every day bored me," Ali says. "With a diverse group of people, you have diverse opinions on different topics."

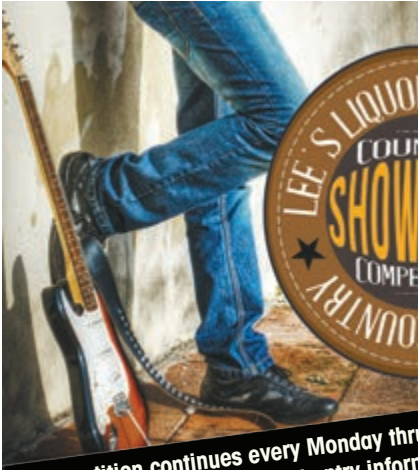
Still, Ali frequently stands out among her friends as the one who — for all her jokes and her love of podcasts, movies, and traveling — still covers herself from head to toe. When she hangs out at someone's house, she's usually the only Somali girl. Parents give her a lot of, "Oh, I don't like black people, Muslims are a problem, but you're different."

"I just sit there like...am I supposed to say thank you?" Ali laughs. She's sure they mean no harm. "I've gotten a lot of 'Good for you' from adults in my life. I've had people introduce me as their Somali friend instead of just their friend."

She's heard plenty of foolishness from the Somali side as well. To more recent immigrants, she's Americanized, "white-washed." Sometimes that's a good thing. Because Somalis are ridiculed for speaking their language in public, they drive each other to learn English. In the remedial learning center where Ali tutors two days a week, she's frequently approached by Somali mothers who coo over her perfect pronunciation and her mastery of Americanisms.

"It's almost seen as a good thing to be Americanized, like they're ashamed of who they are, like white is good, white is smart, and they want their kids to behave like me because that's what it means to assimilate," Ali says.

"It's either that, or they think it's terrible that I'm forgetting who I am and where I come from. There are never people who just say this is fine. This is just one way to live." ☐



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THE DEATH OF FINE DINING

Does Minneapolis have a fine dining “problem”?
Maybe, but that’s not necessarily a problem.



Brasserie Zentral closed last week.

E. KATIE HOLM

BY MECCA BOS

When Tim McKee, chef/owner of the late La Belle Vie, hears that I want to talk about the state of fine dining in Minneapolis, he says, “You and everybody else.”

One might expect McKee, the man who put true fine dining on the local map, to be seeing red about the recent shuttering of so many culinary powerhouses: La Belle Vie, Vincent, and Brasserie Zentral. All three were run by seasoned professionals who have been in the business for decades.

They’d all been around long enough to watch the culture of dining change, and change it did.

But McKee is not panicked. He’s casual.

It’s pretty simple, he says. People want to eat out differently than they once did. And it’s not just a Twin Cities thing. There are indicators of it all over the country.

“We want to be comfortable. We want to wear jeans. That’s more important to us than making an event of going out to eat.” And no, says McKee, that doesn’t mean we’re a bunch of rubes.

“We have a strong and vibrant dining

scene. People are interested in going out to eat, and they’re willing to spend money.” It’s a simple matter of people wanting something different than they did when La Belle Vie was at its height.

McKee also thinks that the term “fine dining” as we use it around here is a misnomer. True fine dining, the likes of Daniel or Le Bernardin (places that seek and keep Zagat ratings and Michelin stars) do not thrive here the way they do in New York for what might be a really simple reason: population size. “They have exponentially more people,” McKee says. Not to mention

far more tourist dollars.

Vincent Francoual, who closed his eponymous restaurant after 14 years last December, sees things a little bit differently.

Francoual hails from France, and places like his own or La Belle Vie, are what he thinks of as “European style” — places where he says an evening of dining can take on almost a “spiritual” significance; where diners may linger over many hours, over inventive and seasonal courses, in a ritualized order, with attendant wine pairings, and a high expectation of service. He believes the desire to dine that way, or

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Birdie limits its business hours and sells tickets to keep fine dining afloat.

E. KATIE HOLM

not dine that way, is cultural. And here in Minnesota, “fine dining” has traditionally meant the steakhouse — people are willing to splurge on big hunks of steak and rich sides of potatoes and buttered up, bacony vegetables. Competing against that is a tall order. “It’s about value perception. People want to eat it for dinner, and take it home too. It’s like a restaurant and a grocery store.”

He says even the way Michelin, the ultimate arbiter of taste, rates U.S. restaurants versus European restaurants indicates different standards. He points to a place like Longman and Eagle in Chicago, a wildly popular restaurant with excellent food in an uber casual environment. “It makes me want to laugh. That gets a star? I mean the food is, but not the ambiance or the service.”

McKee agrees. “Your food can be every bit as amazing as Le Bernardin...but if you’re not reaching for the margins at the top with all the details [including ambiance and service], then it’s not fine dining.” Why aren’t restaurateurs reaching for those margins as much? “It’s not necessary and it’s not what people are looking for anymore.”

Russell and Desta Klein are currently in the throes of closing their highly rated downtown Minneapolis restaurant Brasserie Zentral. At least by local standards, it was about as fine as anything we had left and received almost every accolade availed by press outlets. And yet, as they told the Star Tribune, “the restaurant never achieved the financial success necessary to continue operating.”

The new generation of restaurateur does not seem to be grappling with as many financial woes nor the same overhead. They want to cook progressive food as much as any gifted chef — so much so that they’re willing to grab real estate in

marginal neighborhoods, rehab tiny spaces, sell tickets, cook only on the weekends, open in hotels, and try out any number of other creative fixes.

Locally, we’ve got Birdie, Corner Table, Sanctuary, St. Genevieve, the Bachelor Farmer, Burch, Il Foro, Heyday, Alma, Heartland, Piccolo, 112 Eatery, Haute Dish, the Kenwood, Travail, and the list goes on. These are places where you’ll dine very finely indeed, but the environs might be eclectic and the servers might be in denim. The price points are oftentimes also quite lower than you’ll find in traditional fine dining establishments. If this is offensive to any old-guard way of thinking about the concept, it should be noted that all of these restaurants happen to still be open.

Of course, as Francoual reminds us, every restaurant has its own financial ecosystem. A restaurant closing does not always indicate an immediate and devastating lack of audience. Restaurants must have adequate financing in order to weather revenue ebbs. Sometimes, restaurants have bad years and still remain open. Vincent opened just prior to 9/11 and survived the recession, anti-French sentiment (remember “Freedom Fries”?), and all manner of other ubiquitous restaurant pitfalls and doldrums, and yet remained open for what is surely a lifetime in restaurant years.

And just as soon as we’ve decided that fine dining and all of its attendant adornments are out the door, for the birds, and completely passe, it will be time to reverse those sentiments. Someday it will once more be cool to make dining out an event, to leave your jeans at home, and again start reaching for those margins. Because the world of dining is nothing if not trendy, and by definition, no trend can ever stay the same. **CF**

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UNLESS YOU COME IN THE BACK.



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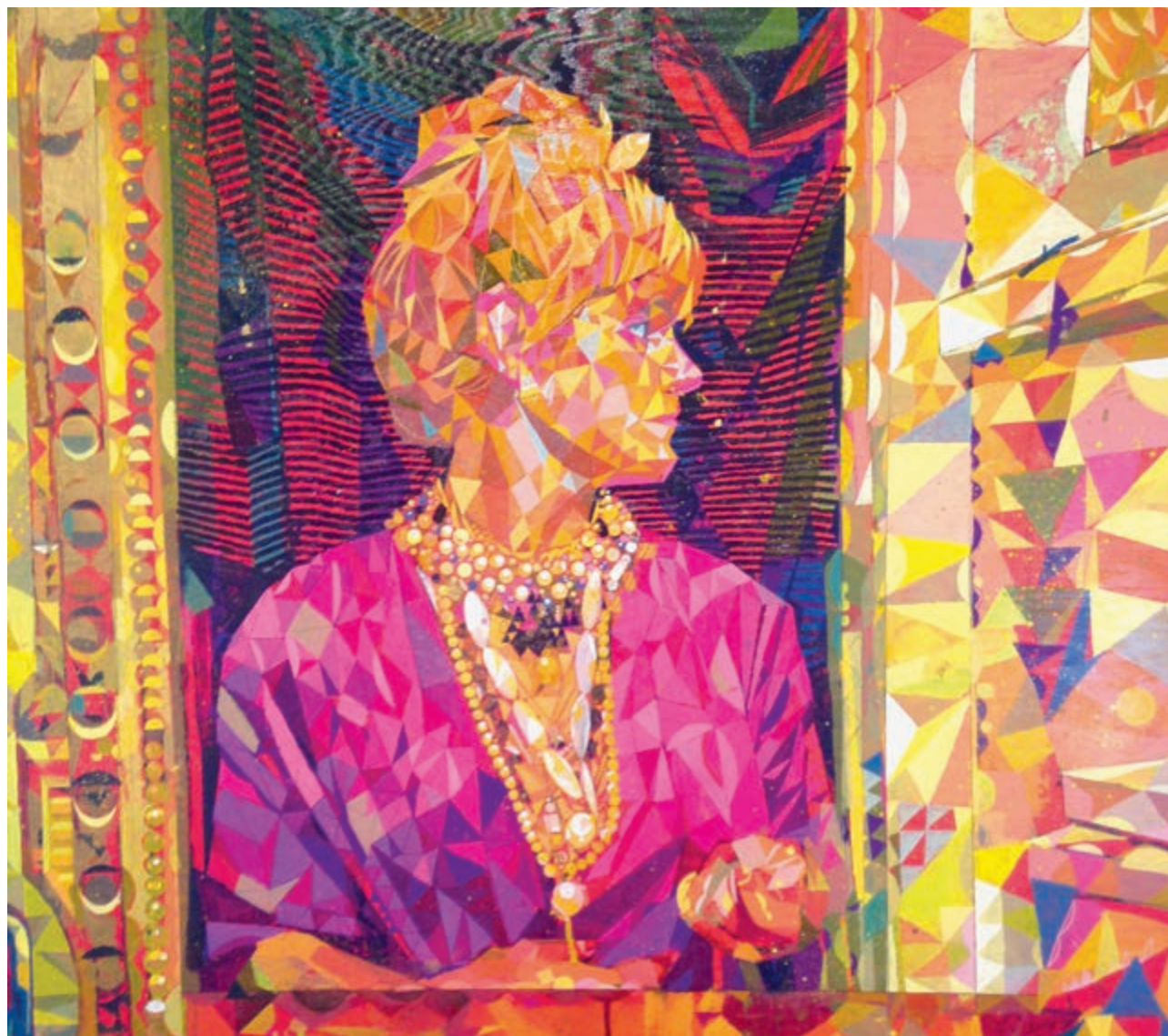
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOE DICKIE

A LIST

FRIDAY Haunting new art by J.M. Culver **P. 25**

SATURDAY Cats and ski jumping (not at the same event) **P. 26**

SUNDAY Winter bike racing (with beer!) **P. 27**



Artists create portraits in a variety of styles for ditch.gallery's latest show

ANDRÉS GUZMÁN

WEDNESDAY 1/20

BARHOPPING

INFUSION BATTLE: BENT PADDLE VS. INDEED

CLUBHOUSE JAGER

Infusing beer and liquor with additional ingredients is a longstanding tradition that has yielded a variety of really awesome (hello, cucumber vodka) and really awful (hey there, fennel beer) results. This Wednesday, two breweries

will square off in a battle of infusions that will hopefully be as tasty as it is intoxicating. For this competition, Bent Paddle and Indeed Brewery will be adding a special something to one of their flagship beers, and attendees will be invited to select the best batch. Bent Paddle will be taking their Venture Pils, a golden, hoppy, malty pint reminiscent of Bohemia brews, and adding blueberries. Meanwhile, Indeed Brewery will be starting with its crisp Dandy Lager and adding lime and Mexican honey.

Yum. Both will be available on draft. Should you get hungry, there will be plenty of beer-infused nosh featuring Bent Paddle's Cold Press Black Ale and Indeed Brewery's Midnight Ryder Black IPA. Free. 6 to 8 p.m. 923 Washington Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-332-2686. **-JESSICA ARMBRUSTER**

DATING

THE SINGLES EXCHANGE

PHOENIX THEATER

Eligible singles' unattached status can

present an irresistible challenge to well-meaning acquaintances bent on playing matchmaker. Thankfully the Grown-Up Club, a social organization specializing in creative activities for adults, is hosting a fresh round of the Singles Exchange. Using imaginatively designed PowerPoint presentations, 12 speakers are granted five minutes each to vouch for their single friend, citing the virtues that make them an ideal catch. In addition to sharing physical stats, presenters are encouraged to provide their own testimonials, show candid photographs, and opine on compatible personality traits. With none of the candidates present, participants can speak freely without fear of embarrassing their friend or putting any added pressure on the proceedings. Even those walking away without finding a match, however, are likely to leave with a smile, as the lighthearted atmosphere serves as an easygoing social mixer regardless of one's relationship status. Those interested in nominating a friend can find further guidelines at grownup.club/events. \$10. 7 p.m. 2605 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-377-2285. **-BRAD RICHASON**

THURSDAY 1/21

FESTIVAL

GUERRILLA GIRLS' TWIN CITIES TAKEOVER

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

The Twin Cities is getting an extra dose of feminism over the next three months, as art institutions big and small welcome the Guerrilla Girls to Minnesota with a series of gallery exhibitions, museum interventions, public art displays, and more. Guerrilla Girls' Twin Cities Takeover marks the 30th anniversary of the anonymous activist group, and many museums, colleges, universities, and galleries around town will be participating. There's a GG-designed installation showcasing their poster archive at the Walker Art Center, new work created by teens in collaboration with the Girls in downtown

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 ►



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89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
THE CURRENT'S ANNIVERSARY PARTY
FEATURING
LOW
JOHN MARK NELSON
MIXED BLOOD MAJORITY
BAD BAD HATS
BONES & BEEKER
\$20/7PM/18+

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4

GUSTER
VETIVER
\$31/7PM/18+

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13

DEVOTCHKA
\$25/7:30PM/18+

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26 &
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27

CHERUB
TWO NIGHTS:
GIBBZ
MIKE FLOSS
\$17/\$20/8PM/18+

SATURDAY, MARCH 12

DAUGHTER
\$16/8PM/18+

89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
THE CURRENT'S ANNIVERSARY PARTY
FEATURING
TOMMY STINSON
GRAMMA'S BOYFRIEND
THE CACTUS BLOSSOMS
GOSPEL MACHINE
BRUISE VIOLET
\$20/7PM/18+

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5

BIG HEAD TODD & THE MONSTERS
MIKE DOUGHTY
\$32.50/\$35/7PM/18+

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14

DEQUEKATRON X000 PRESENTS
THE LOVE BELOW: ALL R&B DANCE NITE - VALENTINE'S DAY EDITION
FEATURING
TIIIIIIIIIP
SLAMDUNKAPHER
HOSTED BY MICAMARYJANE
\$8/\$10/9PM/18+

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28

LH000
ANIMAL COLLECTIVE
RATKING
\$25/7PM/18+

FRIDAY, MARCH 18

89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
THE PINES
ABOVE THE PRAIRIE RELEASE
WITH PHIL COOK
AND STOLYETTE
\$15/8PM/18+

CITY PAGES PRESENTS
RYAN BINGHAM
BIRD DOG
\$25/7PM/18+

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6

89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
LIZZO FEATURING DJ SOPHIA ERIS
\$20/8PM/18+

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20

FIRST AVENUE AND GREENROOM MAGAZINE PRESENT
ISLAH TOUR PART 2 KEVIN GATES
YOUNG GREATNESS
OG BOOBIE BLACK
\$25/8PM/18+

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 29

T PRESENTS
NIGHTWISH
SONATA ARCTICA
DELAIN
\$37.50/\$40 DOS/5PM/ALL AGES

SATURDAY, MARCH 19

GREENSKY BLUEGRASS
\$18/\$20/7PM/18+

PER AND SO GNAR PRESENT
SEAN ANONYMOUS 10TH ANNUAL BIRTHDAY SHOW FEATURING SEAN ANONYMOUS & DJ NAME SIMS
GREG GREASE
CRUNCHY KIDS
SOPHIA ERIS (DJ SET)
LIVE ART BY CHUCK U
\$10/\$12/8PM/18+

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR
XYLOURIS WHITE
\$25/7:30PM/18+

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

9IX PRESENTS
GYPSY CARAVAN TOUR WOLFMOTHER
DEAP VALLY
\$20/7:30PM/18+

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9

89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
TY SEGALL & THE MUGGERS
FEELS
\$20/7:30PM/18+

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23

89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
LUCIUS
PURE BATHING CULTURE
\$20/\$22/7PM/18+

89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
BABES IN TOYLAND
KITTEN FOREVER
AGEIST
\$25/7PM/18+

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12

FOREVER YOUNG LOVE SEMI-FORMAL
A SEMI-FORMAL CELEBRATING THE LOVE SONGS OF THE TRL ERA
\$6 ADVANCE
\$10 FOR TWO ADVANCE TICKETS
\$8 DOORS/9PM/18+

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

ST. LUCIA
GRACE MITCHELL
\$20/7:30PM/18+

THURSDAY, MARCH 10

FIRST AVENUE AND THE CEDAR PRESENT
LAKE STREET DIVE
THE SUFFERS
\$25/7PM/18+

SATURDAY, MARCH 26

SOUL ASYLUM
\$20/8PM/18+

FIRST AVENUE & 7th St entry

ALSO COMING TO THE MAINROOM

- 4/03 **MUTEMATH** 18+
4/06 **GLORIOUS DEAD PRESENTS: FLATBUSH ZOMBIES** "3001: The Tour" All Ages
4/09 **GALACTIC** w/ **BOMBINO** 18+
4/10 **ANI DIFRANCO** w/ **CHASTITY BROWN** presented by The Cedar 18+
4/19 **ANDREW BIRD** 18+
4/22 & 23 **BOB MOULD** w/ **THE SUICIDE COMMANDOS, FURY THINGS** 18+
4/24 *Savage Imperial Death March Tour featuring*
NAPALM DEATH, MELVINS, MELT BANANA 18+
4/28-30 **UMPHREY'S MCGEE (THREE SHOWS)** 18+
5/07 **TINA AND THE B-SIDES** 18+
5/13 **GEAR DADDIES** 18+
5/21 **BOYCE AVENUE** "Be Somebody World Tour" All Ages
10/30 **AN EVENING WITH PETER HOOK & THE LIGHT, PERFORMING "SUBSTANCE" - JOY DIVISION & NEW ORDER** 18+

7TH ST ENTRY

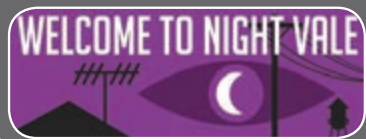
- 1/20 **MIC Q.A & SIEED BROWN "A FAMILY FUNCTION"** 18+
1/21 **GUANTE and DIS-PLAY** w/ **ANDRE MARIETTE AND MORE** 18+
1/22 **CITY OF SOUND VINYL RELEASE PARTY** w/ **HOT DATE, PORNO WOLVES, MANIC PLANET** 18+
1/23 **LOWER DENS** w/ **INVISIBLE BOY** 18+
1/26 **THE KNOCKS "ROUTE 55 TOUR"** w/ **CARDIKNOX, sloslylove** 18+
1/27 **UMAMI and BAYONNE** w/ **BEASTHEAD** 18+
1/28 **THE AMERICAN DEFORMITY TOUR PART II** ft. **INVIDIOSUS, DEFEATED SANITY, INIQUITOUS SAVAGERY, INIQUITOUS DEEDS, FACE OF OBLIVION** 18+
1/29 **MODERN RADIO SWEET SIXTEEN** ft. **SICBAY, STNNG, FURY THINGS, B.O.Y.F.** 18+
1/30 **DAVE RAVE AND THE GOVERNORS, RICH MATTSON AND THE NORTHSTARS, LOLO'S GHOST** 18+
1/31 **CARROLL** w/ **RUPERT ANGELEYES** 18+
2/01 **GRIZFOLK** w/ **MAX FROST** 18+
2/04 **DOKS ROBOTIKS ALBUM RELEASE PARTY** w/ **LYDIA LIZA, SAYTH, LIZEA HARPER, SLOSLYLOVE, HOSTED BY EJ** 18+
2/05 **MEAT WAVE** w/ **RAD PAYOFF, THE CHINCHEES** 18+
2/06 **WET** w/ **KELSEY LU** 18+
2/07 **MARTIN COURTNEY** w/ **EZTV** 18+
2/08 **BORA YORK and MASS GOTHIC** w/ **MAZED** 18+
2/10 **GABE DOUGLAS & FRIENDS** w/ **MRDR, GRAMMAR** 18+
2/11 **DRAKE NITE 4** w/ **DJ BACH, GREENERY, ☁ (CLOUD)** 18+
2/12 **ACT OF DEFIANCE** 18+
2/13 **ANDREW RIPP** w/ **SWEAR AND SHAKE** 18+
2/14 **DIANE COFFEE** 18+
2/15 **CHRIS BATHGATE** 18+
2/16 **MARGARET GLASPY** 18+
2/17 **ANDY FRASCO & THE U.N.** 18+
2/18 **COMMUNION: TWIN CITIES** ft. **ALLAN RAYMAN, LOLO, WHISKEY SHIVERS, MOONRISE NATION** 18+
2/21 **CAVANAUGH (OPEN MIKE EAGLE & SERENGETI!)** 18+
2/27 **AUDIO SOCIAL DISSENT 2016** ft. **WOLF EYES, TIMMY'S ORGANISM, VIDEO** 18+
2/29 **LEAP-A-PALOOZA** ft. **DAN MARISKA, FULLBLOODS, BLUE GREEN** 18+
3/01 **JULIA HOLTER** w/ **CIRCUIT DES YEUX** 18+
3/02 **ELLIOTT BROOD** 18+
3/04 **TWIN CITIES DILLADAY BEAT WARS** w/ **CARNAGE THE EXECUTIONER** 18+

For show announcements, updates, set times, giveaways, and more:

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UPCOMING SHOWS AT OTHER VENUES

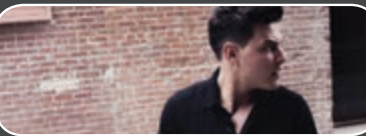
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SATURDAY, APRIL 16
WELCOME TO NIGHT VALE
w/ special musical guest
DANNY SCHMIDT & CARRIE ELKIN
at the STATE THEATRE
\$27.50-\$32.50/7PM/ALL AGES



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27
City Pages presents
JOSH RITTER & THE ROYAL CITY BAND
w/ **ELEPHANT REVIVAL**
at the PANTAGES THEATRE
\$35-\$45/7PM/ALL AGES



SATURDAY, JANUARY 30
TOR MILLER
w/ **SEAN MCVERRY**
at BRYANT LAKE BOWL
\$12/9:30PM/18+



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5
89.3 The Current and KUMD present
HIPPO CAMPUS
at CLYDE IRON WORKS (DULUTH)
\$12/6:30PM/ALL AGES



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6
CASPIAN
w/ **O'BROTHER**
at the TRIPLE ROCK
\$15/8PM/18+



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22
First Avenue, JAM, Northrop, and 89.3 The Current present
JASON ISBELL
w/ **SHOVELS & ROPE**
at NORTHROP
\$40/6:30PM/ALL AGES



FRIDAY, MARCH 4
FOXING
w/ **LYMBYC SYSTYM, TANCRED, ADJY**
at the TRIPLE ROCK
\$13/\$15/4:30PM/ALL AGES



FRIDAY, MARCH 11
An Evening with
LILY & MADELEINE
at ICEHOUSE
\$16/10:30PM/21+



SATURDAY, MARCH 12
First Avenue and 89.3 The Current present
An Evening With
CLOUD CULT
at the STATE THEATRE
\$30-\$35/7PM/ALL AGES



THURSDAY, MARCH 17
Set In Stone Tour
STICK FIGURE
w/ **FORTUNATE YOUTH, RAGING FYAH**
at the TRIPLE ROCK
\$15/7PM/18+



SATURDAY, MARCH 19
An Evening with
GREG DULLI
w/ special guest **DERRICK BROWN**
at the CEDAR
\$30/7PM/ALL AGES

3/25 **YOUNG FATHERS** at the Fine Line

3/27 **YUNG LEAN** at the Fine Line

3/30 **THAO & THE GET DOWN STAY DOWN** w/ **SAINTSENECA** at the Fine Line

4/01 **RUN RIVER NORTH** at the Triple Rock

4/02 **A GREAT BIG WORLD "KALEIDOSCOPE TOUR"** at the Fine Line

7th St entry **FIRST AVENUE** THE RECORD ROOM

boyce avenue

BE SOMEBODY WORLD TOUR

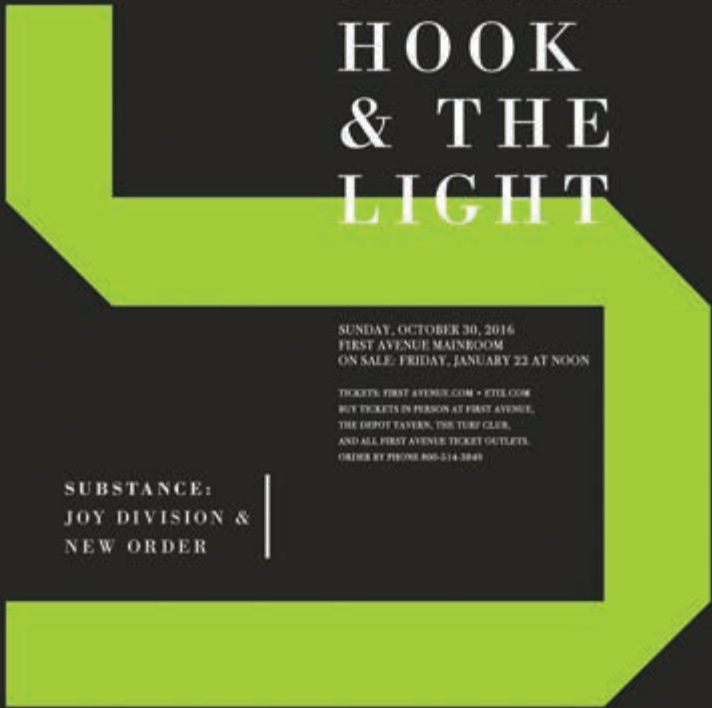


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A-LIST



Guerrilla Girls take to the streets, galleries, and schools this season

COURTESY OF GUERRILLA GIRLS

CONTINUED FROM THURSDAY ►

storefronts, and an exhibition featuring pieces by college students at MCAD. The Girls will also be making their mark over at Mia, creating posters that comment on the museum's collection. Separately, they'll be projecting some of their work on buildings in downtown Minneapolis as part of a huge public art display hosted by the Hennepin Theatre Trust. In addition, there will be dozens of related exhibitions celebrating Minnesota's own feminist artists, plus panel discussions, parties, lectures, and more. For a complete list of happenings, visit ggtakeover.com.

Through March 5 —SHEILA REGAN

DANCE

STUDY 1 PERCEPTIONS: STUCK OR UNSTUCK

INTERMEDIA ARTS

Choreographer Jennifer Glaws approaches dance-making like a scientist. Her latest work explores "target fixation" — something that attracts moths to a flame, or causes pilots to veer off course. Glaws translates this kind of obsessive attraction into a dance for four women, asking them to challenge their movement habits and take a ride into the unknown. While Glaws offers heady descriptions of movement derived from a practice called creative cognition, she promises plenty of robust physicality as well. \$12-\$20 sliding scale; \$8-\$15 Thursday. 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. 2822 Lyndale Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-871-4444.

Through Saturday —LINDA SHAPIRO

ART/MUSEUM

EMMETT RAMSTAD AND LINDSAY RHYNER

MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS

In this joint show in the MAEP Galleries, Emmett Ramstad takes the quotidian to other realms in his explorations of

donated items, some of them as intimate as toothbrushes and underwear. He's also incorporating a participatory aspect into his exhibition, titled "Touching Each Other," inviting visitors to join him in sock darning and sorting. Meanwhile, in "Material Worlds," Lindsay Rhyner works with a wholly different set of textiles, exhibiting her wall hangings inspired by found photos and postcards from the 1940s. Textural, colorful, and absorbing, her pieces also utilize sequins and rhinestones to amplify the materiality of her transformed imagery. There will be an opening reception Thursday, January 21, from 6 to 9 p.m. during the museum's Third Thursday celebration. 2400 Third Ave. S., Minneapolis; 888-642-2787.

Through April 3 —CAMILLE LEFEVRE

DANCE PARTY

FLIP PHONE: BIEBER KEEBLER SIGOURNEY WEAVER FEVER

HONEY

What do Justin Bieber, Sigourney Weaver, and the Keebler Elves have in common? Nothing, except for this edition of Flip Phone. This week's installment of the notoriously awesome LGBTQ dance party will feature tunes from the Biebs, Canada's most maddening export, from DJ Fancy Restaurant. Sigourney Weaver-inspired looks are encouraged, be it an '80s power-suit (*Working Girl*), a woman possessed by a time-traveling demon dog (*Ghostbusters*), or a tough lady ready to kick some ass in a white tank (*Aliens*). Should you get hungry, Keebler cookies will be plentiful and free (or come prepared and bring your own Coconut Dreams). To help you get toasty, specialty cocktails, rails, and taps will be \$4 until midnight. 21+. \$5 cover. 9:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. 205 E. Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-746-0306. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

ART/GALLERY

FRIENDS AND STRANGERS: A PORTRAIT COLLECTION

DITCH.GALLERY

For the latest show at ditch.gallery in the North Loop, a handful of artists will be sharing their take on portraits, a genre of art that allows for wide and varied interpretations. There will be works almost photographic in their realism, pieces that look like fading memories, geometric constructions, and wary cartoony cats. Works include bold and colorful art by Jennifer Davis, playful pieces by Michael Gaughan, and the intricately illustrative elements of DC Ice. Jonny Kelson, Collin Marx, Justin Schlepp, Katelyn Farstad, Kelsey Olson, Andrés Guzmán, and Sarah Hedlund will also be exhibiting. There will be an opening reception Thursday, January 21, from 6 to 9 p.m. 400 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-355-4300. **Through March 31** -JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

ART/FESTIVAL

GUERRILLA GIRLS: PORTFOLIO COMPLEAT

WALKER ART CENTER

The anonymous, infamous art gals launch their Twin Cities takeover this week with a number of kick-off events, including “Portfolio Compleat” at the Walker Art Center. The collection is a boxed set of 88 posters the Guerrilla Girls, which was founded in 1985, have created over the years. It will be continually updated as new posters are created. Hardly strangers to the Walker, the Guerrilla Girls have held numerous programs at the art center over the years, while the museum has been collecting their work. At once enraging, insightful, and inspiring, the posters tell it like it is when it comes to women, art, and patriarchy. The opening reception this Thursday, January 21, features a meet-and-greet session with the Guerrilla Girls at 6 p.m. There will also be a panel discussion with musician/artist Greg Grease; designer, artist, and organizer Ashley Fairbanks; MCAD student, organizer, and artist Mase Santos; and photographer/entrepreneur Anna Min at 6 p.m. Art-making activities will be enjoyed from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Free. 6 to 9 p.m. 1750 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-375-7600. **Through December 31** -CAMILLE LEFEVRE

FRIDAY 1/22

COMEDY

CY AMUNDSON

ACME COMEDY CO.

You can take the comic out of Minnesota — some of the time. Such is the case with Minneapolis native Cy Amundson. Though now residing in Los Angeles,

he frequently takes trips back to the Twin Cities. “[I’ve been] doing a little bit of the back-and-forth thing,” he explains. “I work out there, but still try to get back home as much as possible, because family and stuff like that.... It’s a nice way to stay balanced.” This past year Amundson appeared on episodes of *Family Guy* and *American Dad*. “Doing those was fun, and now I’m kind of just living the struggle of auditioning, selling shows, and doing as much standup as possible.” Whether it’s talking about haggling with people at garage sales or pranking department store employees, Amundson’s easygoing manner is always a crowd pleaser. 18+. \$15-\$18. 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday; 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. 708 N. First St.,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 ▶

ART/GALLERY

J.M. CULVER: WHERE BACK WHEN

AUGSBURG ART GALLERIES



J.M. CULVER

The works of J.M. Culver are deeply personal. Through her large-scale pieces, the Minnesota-based artist shares her family’s history and reconstructs past narratives. For “Where Back When,” a collection that is being shared with the public after over a year of exploration and preparation, Culver recounts and interprets the experiences of her grandfather, retelling his struggles and recollections through art. There are bits covering his time in Vietnam during the war, family memories spent grilling on the beach, and even a few dreams. Though the faces are sometimes blurry, and the details are occasionally smudged, a clear narrative of a life lived emerges. There will be an opening reception Friday, January 22, from 7 to 9 p.m. Gage Family Art Gallery, 2211 Riverside Ave., Minneapolis; 612-330-1524. **Through March 23** -JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

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2/06 **AU PAIR (FEATURING GARY LOURIS AND DJANGO HASKINS)** 8PM
2/09 **HOUSE OF DOSH II: A MONTH LONG RESIDENCY** 8PM
2/10 **2 FAST 4 THE DEVIL AND NON PROPHETS** 7PM
2/11 **MN MUSIC COALITION PRESENTS BEN LUBECK OF FAREWELL MILWAUKEE** W/ SILVERBACK COLONY, MARY BUE 7PM
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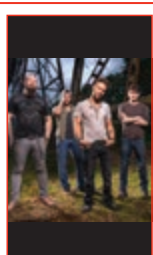
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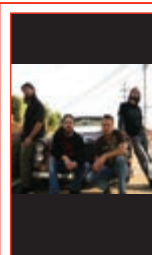
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A-LIST



Rusalka on
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Ordway

MICHAEL DANIEL

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SATURDAY 1/2

THEATER

RUSALKA

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Reprising their critically acclaimed 2008 production, the Minnesota Opera's latest staging of *Rusalka* should provide an antidote to the frigid cold of our long winter nights. A fairytale involving a fabled water nymph who forsakes her ethereal existence in the pursuit of mortal love, the spellbinding work evokes an irresistibly transformative atmosphere of mystical forests and enchanted creatures. Composed in the mid-1800s by Antonín Dvorak, *Rusalka* remains one of the defining works of Czech opera, suffused with a visceral longing that transcends the tale's origins as ancient folklore. This emotional immediacy is epitomized by the sublime voice of Kelly Kaduce, the celebrated soprano (and native Minnesotan) returning to what has become a signature role. Bestowed with an expressive range, Kaduce has the ability to convey the pathos of her tragic situation, never more so than during the stunning "Song to the Moon." Paired with Kaduce is Khachatur Badalyan, a Russian-born tenor making his Minnesota Opera debut in the role of the Prince. The production is under the direction of Eric Simonson, and conducted by Michael Christie. \$25-\$200. 7:30 p.m. Saturdays and Thursday, January 28; 2 p.m. Sunday, January 31. 345 Washington St., St. Paul; 651-224-4222. **Through January 31 -BRAD RICHASON**

ART/GALLERY

SINGING OUR HISTORY: PEOPLE AND PLACES OF THE RED LAKE NATION

KATHERINE E. NASH GALLERY

For this exhibition, the Red Lake Band of Chippewa, who call northern Minnesota home and live in one of the few completely sovereign reservations in the country, collaborated with the University of Minnesota's Department of American Studies. Through various media, which include painting and photography, Red Lake's history finds creative expression in works both rare and familiar. A number of Red Lake artists are present, providing an opportunity to know and acknowledge the Band through its members' artwork. Also included in the show are Jerome Liebling's photos from the 1950s and Charles Brill's photojournalistic essays on Red Lake life. There will be an opening reception Saturday, January 23 from 6 to 9 p.m. Regis Center for Art, University of Minnesota, 405 21st Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-624-7530. **Through February 13 -CAMILLE LEFEVRE**

SPORTS

SKI JUMPING WEEKEND

BUSH LAKE SKI JUMP

Of all the sports out there, ski jumping is one of the most extreme. For starters, the learning curve is intense, to say the least. Kids begin on bunny hills, but eventually competitive athletes make their way to ramps over 150 feet in height. From there, they strap on their equipment and hurl themselves down the ramp in hopes of reaching top speeds before they are propelled into the air. They can remain airborne for 300 feet. This Saturday, you'll be able to see the sport in death-defying action, as



LINDSAY SMITH

members of the Minneapolis Ski Club will host this fun event. Competitors will attempt to travel as far as possible in hopes of earning top honors in the Masters National Championships. The event should serve as a great warmup for the U.S. Cup Ski Jumping Competition arriving next month. Free. 6 p.m. 8401 E. Bush Lake Rd., Bloomington; 952-484-8956. **-JESSICA ARMBRUSTER**

ART/PARTY

GET LUCKY 2016

SOO VISUAL ARTS CENTER

Was one of your New Year's resolutions to buy more local art for your home? One place to fulfill that goal is at Soo Visual Art Center's annual Get Lucky fundraiser. Held for the first time in SooVAC's new digs, which opened last April, Get Lucky once again celebrates Minnesota artists with a bash filled with art, food, drink, and music. Lori Barbero and Sarah White will be providing the tunes, while 2 Gingers Whiskey, Bryant-Lake Bowl, Canteen, Chowgirls Killer Catering, Common Roots, Fulton Beer, and the Third Bird will all be providing delectable treats to keep the party going. You can also feel good picking out artwork knowing that the proceeds go toward the artists and the gallery's programming. \$35-\$55. 7 to 11 p.m. 2909 Bryant Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-871-2263. **-SHEILA REGAN**

CATS

40TH ANNUAL CHAMPIONSHIP AND HOUSEHOLD PET CAT SHOW

SAINT PAUL RIVERCENTRE

A few weeks ago, dogs took over the Xcel for the Kennel Club Dog Show. Now it's time for cats. Over the weekend, 26 different breeds will be judged in five classes, ranging from squee-worthy kittens to chill veteran cats well into their nine lives. As for the variety of

animals, there will be fluffy Maine Coons, squish-faced Persians, pretty kitty Rag Dolls, tail-free Manx, nub-eared Scottish Folds, and a few slate-hued Korats. On Sunday afternoon, a king and queen will be crowned (and caped, puss permitting). There will also be vendors, product demonstrations, and other fun things to check out during the weekend. Do you have an amazing pet that you think could be crowned "best cat" at the show? Instructions on how to enter your fur baby can be found over at rivercentre.org. \$4. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday; 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. 175 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul; 651-265-4800.

Through Sunday -JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

SUNDAY 1/24

SPORTS

CARVER LAKE COLD CATFISH CUP

CARVER LAKE MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILHEAD

Many cyclists have hung up their wheels until warmer temperatures return. This is not the case for riders in the Carver Lake Cold Catfish Cup. This Sunday, they will take to the off-road cycling trail to trek through snow, ice, and bumpy roads in the dead of winter. There will be two events to choose from: the sport race takes riders around the trail a single tour while the elite requires looping around the path three times. Whether you're riding or cheering competitors on, there will be sustenance. Potter's Pasties will be selling sausages and hearty pastry goods while Lake Monster Brewing will be pouring well-earned brews (hey, take credit for weathering the cold even if you are just a spectator). Proceeds from the event will benefit the park's trails. Sign up at ci.woodbury.mn.us. \$10-\$20. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. 3175 Century Ave. S., Woodbury. **-JESSICA ARMBRUSTER**

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<i>Creole Party Music</i> |
| 2/14 | Valentine's Day with Badi Assad
<i>Romantic Brazilian Music</i> |
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<i>Hot Club Jazz and Western Swing</i> |
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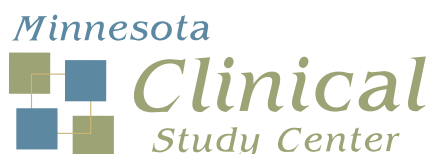
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MARRIAGE, ENGLISH STYLE

45 Years is so understated it's underwhelming



Tom Courtenay (Geoff) and Charlotte Rampling (Kate) in Andrew Haigh's *45 Years*

COURTESY OF AGATHA A. NITECKA. © 45 YEARS FILMS LTD. A SUNDANCE SELECTS RELEASE.

BY MICHAEL NORDINE

Forty-five years is a long time to be married; it's an even longer time to tell a lie of omission. Andrew Haigh's adaptation of David Constantine's short story "In Another Country" finds an English couple (Charlotte Rampling as Kate, Tom Courtenay as Geoff) on the eve of their sapphire anniversary. Haigh, who also directed *Weekend* and 10 episodes of HBO's short-lived *Looking*, scopes out barely perceptible shifts in the dynamic between lovers like a bomb-sniffing dog. Here it's a specter from the past coming back: Some 50 years after her death in a mountain-climbing accident, the body of Geoff's former lover has finally been recovered.

Kate and Geoff have spoken of much during the nearly half-century they've been together, but rarely have either of them felt compelled to broach this subject. It's always been there, lurking in the background, too troubling to address directly. Would they

even be together had this other woman not died?

Neither of them ever raise their voice in the discussions-turned-arguments that ensue. Geoff considers flying to the Swiss Alps despite the grand soiree honoring his marriage in a few short days. Rampling is exemplary (when is she not?) and Courtenay is a subtly thoughtless lout who spends so much time pondering the past he can't see that it's jeopardizing his future. Small moments with broad implications abound, as when Geoff refers to the deceased as "my Katya." Kate betrays her not-entirely-misplaced jealousy as much with what she says as what she doesn't.

On paper, all of this is superlative. That may be part of the problem. *45 Years* hasn't made the leap from story to screen with much verve or feeling; it's easy to appreciate where each half of the childless couple is coming from, but difficult to get immersed in their nuanced, almost subterranean emotions. You understand what's happening on an

intellectual level more than you feel it. *45 Years* is understated to the point of being underwhelming.

It's also a bit like wandering through a cold art museum — you'll be intrigued as you catch a glimpse of these two from afar but, when you come close to observe them like you would a painting, you'll be shooed away. There's nothing in *45 Years* to turn over in your hands and, increasingly as it goes on, not much to turn over in your mind either.

Haigh hits each narrative beat with restraint and precision — a misspoken word with deeper subtext here, a dispiriting revelation about the full extent of Geoff and Katya's relationship there — to the point that the film's narrative trajectory (which is to say, the trajectory of a marriage built on an unsteady foundation) is too easy to see coming.

It begins on a Monday as the two prepare for their party and ends that Saturday, when the event takes place; the start of each new day is marked with onscreen text announc-

45 Years

Directed by Andrew Haigh
Edina Cinema, opens Friday

ing its arrival. This builds tension but also delineates things too clearly — like most else in *45 Years*, it's tasteful and well-executed but rarely surprising.

All relationships need nurturing, of course, and Geoff has been treating Kate like a cactus when he should have been giving her the orchid treatment. "Do you think you weren't enough for me?" he asks in one of many moments of apologetic clarity. "No, I know I was," she responds. "I'm just not sure you do." Kate struggles with how best to deal with Geoff's increasing fixation on Katya: putting on a good face and moving forward, or putting him on blast at the risk of losing him completely. What she most wants — to continue in the belief that her marriage is and always has been fundamentally sound — is no longer an option. **CP**



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LULLABY

A musical that needs more music to find its soul



David Darrow
as Craig and
Adelín Phelps
as Cassie

JOE DICKIE

BY ED HUYCK

The main complaint people have with musicals is that they can't handle the bursts of song in the midst of "real life."

But if film audiences can believe that a man can fly, it's not much of a leap to embrace two people sharing their eternal love with a soaring tune.

Cassie is in trouble. Struggling to take care of her two-year-old son, she's been forced back to her parents' home. And she can't sleep. Three-hours-a-week can't sleep.

Worse, she sees her dead husband everywhere. He'd been a musical soul, constantly singing around the house. Now his spirit continues to do the same, pushing Cassie further and further into despair.

One night Cassie stumbles into a "dyke" bar, where its captivating co-owner Thea is on stage. Cassie has an idea. If Thea can teach her how to play guitar, she can share her husband's music with her son. Cassie hopes this soul-soothing act will finally let her sleep.

Thea, not surprisingly, thinks Cassie is looking for a date. She has recently broken up with her long-time partner and is also adrift. She lives out of a U-Haul, afraid to find a new place in case her old flame asks her back.

Once Cassie makes her reasons clear, Thea is on board. Their friendship blossoms, but Cassie's problems run deep

LULLABY

Ritz Theater
345 13th Ave. NE, Minneapolis
Through Feb. 7; 612-339-3003

— especially as we learn more about the circumstances of her husband's death and the anger she feels for her absent, alcoholic mother. Playwright Michael Elyanow gives us a work with a gentle soul, populated by characters that go beyond "grieving wife" and "jilted lover." The actors — especially sweet-voiced David Darrow as Craig, the late husband, and the tough-but-tender Annie Enneking as Thea — are excellent.

So why is *Lullaby* less than it could be? It goes back to the whole "play with music." The songs are fine and the performances engaging, but the scenes where a character just stands on stage and sings are dramatically inert.

They only come to life when Craig's specter follows Cassie. It's a breathtaking moment that finally welds the music to the drama.

Considering Cassie's tenuous connection to reality, more of this could have been done. A confrontation with her father thirsts for a song instead of shouty acting. A song that gets to the heart of their conflict could have been rare and beautiful.

That's *Lullaby* in a nutshell: a good story and solid performances shortchanged by a script afraid to embrace its own musical heart. **C-**

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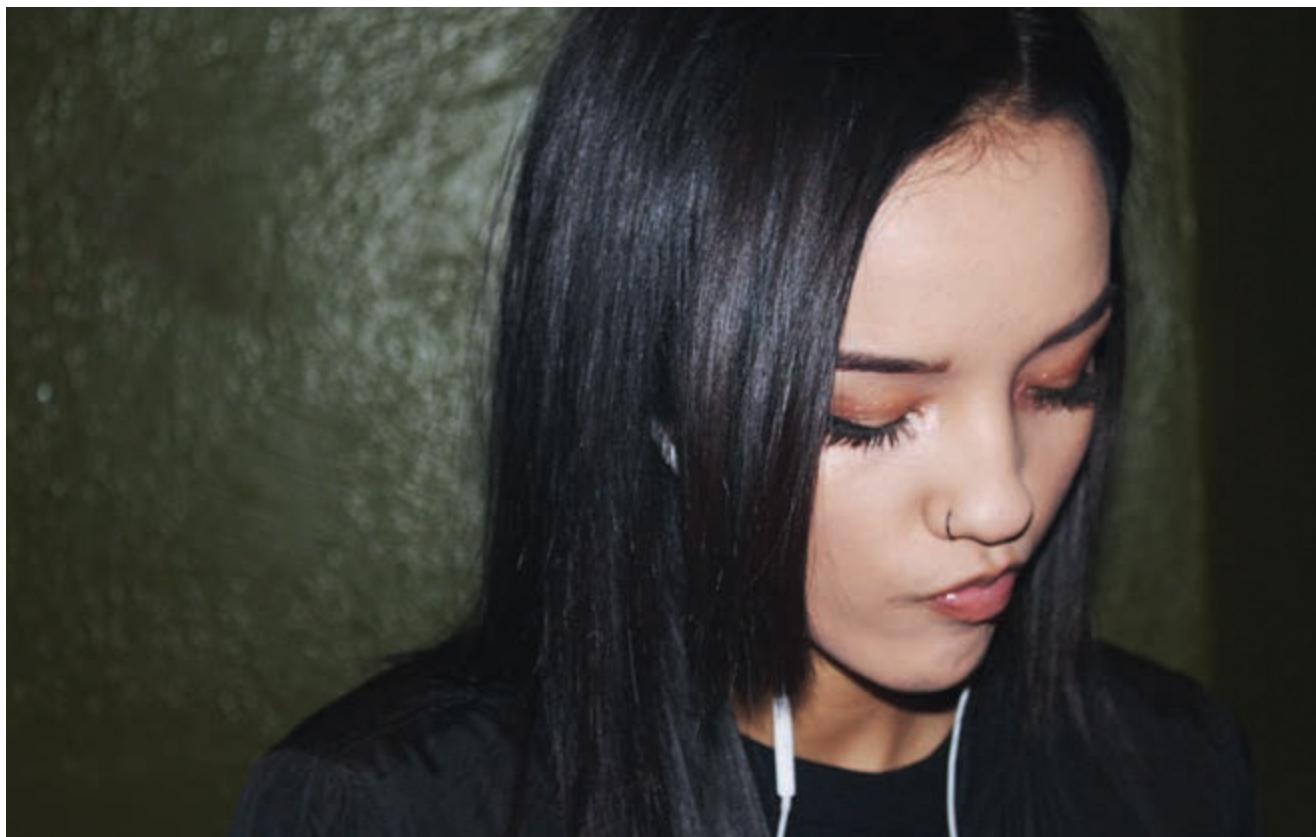
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SHE RUN THIS

Buzzy St. Paul rapper Lexii Alijai, 17, empowers girls while putting guys on notice.



You wasted your youth: Lexii Alijai is only 17.

SAINT LARON

JACK SPENCER

Lexii Alijai is soft-spoken, but her voice contains multitudes. Sitting in her basement studio in St. Paul, surrounded by 2Pac posters and surrealist prints, she answers questions with the same warm fragility she brings to her rap flow. Simultaneously emanating vulnerability and strength, the 17-year-old MC's vocal quality matches her introspective, soul-spilling lyrics of love, hurt, pain, and self-affirmation.

"I heard 'Crooked Smile' by [J. Cole], and that was the first song that ever did anything for me," says Alijai, and her music follows much of Cole's honest and conversational writing style. "It picked me up, and I never felt an artist do that for me. That's why I started getting more personal in my music. It's just cool to make people feel the same

way that J. Cole made me feel."

Following in that style, Alijai honed her sound into a signature mix of raw, relatable, heartfelt lyricism. She's a talented technician well beyond her years, and her unique rap cadence rounds out the sound with a melodic tinge and an understated vehemence. It's a combination that's getting noticed in Minnesota press and beyond. To date, the teenage rapper has amassed more than 20,000 Instagram followers and nearly 13,000 fans on music-streaming website SoundCloud. She even scored a write-up last spring in *Complex* magazine.

"Nobody ever used to care to listen to my music," she says, noting a dramatic uptick in social media followers and outreach from fans. "I think it's just the growth in everything. The delivery, my voice changed a lot, I'm talking about different stuff. People just look out now. They actually care."

Alijai played First Avenue's Best New Bands showcase earlier this month, and next Friday at Fine Line she'll open for Atlantic Records-signed R&B sensation Kehlani, who helped Alijai gain mainstream exposure thanks to a standout guest verse on single "Jealous."

"Somehow, through mutual friends, [Kehlani] heard my music, and we kind of just built a relationship over that summer," Alijai says. "She sent the record to me, and I just wrote it down while I was at school. I came [to the studio] the same day and recorded it. We sent it right back to her within the same day."

Friday's Fine Line bill, which includes local artists Dizzy Fae and DJ Keezy, is all-female, save for Thestand4rd's DJ Tiiiiiiiiip. Alijai enjoys the "mental connection" between female performers, and says women tend to relate with her music's

LEXII ALIJAI

will play Fine Line with Kehlani and Dizzy Fae on Friday, Jan. 29.

reflective takes on romantic relationships.

"They get it. The guys, you can take what you want from it," she says. "You can learn how to treat your girlfriend better, or learn what's going on inside of a girl's head. I'm so honest, you know what I mean, and I really put the guys on the spot. I just say stuff that every girl goes through, and they just can't say it. I just wanna make the guys better, too."

Alijai's most recent project, 2015's *Joseph's Coat*, focuses on relationship struggles, ultimately concluding loving one's self comes first. It fine-tunes some of the intensity and bravado that she brought to her previous projects, such as her 2014

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MUSIC

debut *feel-less*, and *Same Struggle, Different Story*, last year's collaborative effort with rapper Shaun Sloan.

On *Joseph's Coat*, Alijai shifted from writing about her family struggles, which inspired profoundly heavy older songs like "Killer" and "No Cry," the latter of which featured Twin Cities R&B singer/former *The Voice* contestant Ashley DuBose. The vibe remains striking and carries similar weight on the new tracks, but expresses her thoughts on romantic discontentment and self-actualization.

"You got my mind, my body, and my spirit/Lotta feelings that I hide, you probably never hear it/Only time you know the truth when you listening to my lyrics," Alijai raps on recent single "By Your Side."

"With *Joseph's Coat*, I felt love for the first time," she says. "[On *feel-less*] I didn't know what that was. I was young; I didn't care about boys. So much has changed in a year. It just make you see stuff so differently."

The new album offers an in-depth glimpse into Alijai's mind. She doesn't flatten her material to appeal to a broader audience. Throughout the highly individualized-yet-relatable *Joseph's Coat*, there seems to be a drive to pay forward what personal, reflective art has given to Alijai.

"I like Lexii's ability to put into words the thoughts and feelings that so many can relate to, and to put them in such a clever and catchy way," says DuBose, who appeared on *feel-less* and featured Alijai on her most recent album, *Be You*. "I like that she's has a very shy and mysterious persona. I thought she fit. She had a very real perspective to offer, and her flow is so smooth and delectable."

Alijai's hybrid style blends melodic R&B with trap drums and flipped samples, and she grabs guest spots from both rappers and singers to reflect her own dual sensibilities. When tapping into her own sensitivities and emotional hardships, she filters her feelings through a strident flow, turning pain into strength. Does the music serve a therapeutic purpose for her? When asked, she shrugs.

"Sometimes I watch music documentaries with artists talking about how [they write music] to get stuff off of their chest, you know," she says. "But I don't know if that's how it is for me or if I just haven't realized that that's what I do. I just write."

Without revealing specifics, Alijai reports having discovered a new potential source of inspiration for her upcoming project, but you can be certain of her approach. For Alijai, the future is exploding with potential, and she says her earnest, heart-on-sleeve music will always remain true to herself.

"I don't like forcing anything. I just like to make it and see what happens." ☐



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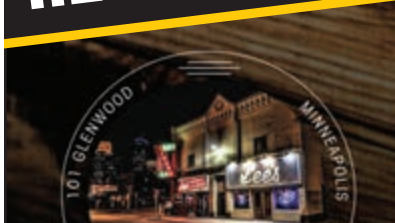
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MUSIC CRITICS' PICKS

STRAYA

KITTY CAT KLUB, THURSDAY 1.21

Though just one album and now one EP deep into their catalog, Radio K favorites Straya have already proven to be virtuosos of multi-layered sound. On last year's shape-shifting, full-length album *Healthy Steps*, the Minneapolis band's emo/post-hardcore instrumentation and time-signature jumping made for thrillingly chaotic moments, while their softer ambient/post-rock maneuvering smoothed the edges. That penchant for different styles never came at the expense of cohesion. On lead vocals, Cody Nelson evokes Real Estate frontman Martin Courtney in quieter moments, and At the Drive-In/Mars Volta leader Cedric Bixler-Zavala when things get more convulsive. If, for whatever reason, none of that sounds appealing, at least do yourself a favor and Google the band for their hilariously random song titles ("Treat Me Like Prince," "Killer Mike Saved My Life," etc.) and social media activity (they've dubbed themselves as an "athletic rock band," presumably a jab at label-happy music critics). This show at Kitty Cat Club, featuring supporting acts William Within, Strange Relations, and Maeth, marks the release of that aforementioned EP. 21+. Free. 9 p.m. 315 14th Ave. SE, Minneapolis; 612-331-9800. —MICHAEL MADDEN

THE CURRENT'S 11TH BIRTHDAY PARTIES

FIRST AVENUE, FRIDAY & SATURDAY 1.22-23

While biased national tastemakers continue to designate Brooklyn and Chicago as the foremost hotbeds for American music, 89.3 the Current has put a spotlight on Minnesota's various musical eras, sounds, and cultures for the past 11 years. To celebrate that run, the station is throwing itself a two-night birthday bash at First Avenue. Slowcore pioneers Low headline Night One, a set that will be preceded by post-Sufjan indie-folker John Mark Nelson, rumbling rap super-trio Mixed Blood Majority, 2015 City Pages Picked to Click winners Bad Bad Hats, and rap experimenters Bones & Beeker. On Saturday, Replacements kid brother-turned-rock-elder-statesman Tommy Stinson gets top billing, wrapping up the night after performances by dance-rockers Gramma's Boyfriend, brotherly country preservers the Cactus Blossoms, garage/gospel slow-burners Gospel Machine, and precocious punks Bruise Violet. Three decades after *Purple Rain* (the film) made First Avenue a household name nationwide, these lineups will make a case for the strength and variety of independent music in Minnesota circa 2016. 18+. \$20. 7:30 p.m. 701 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8388. —MICHAEL MADDEN

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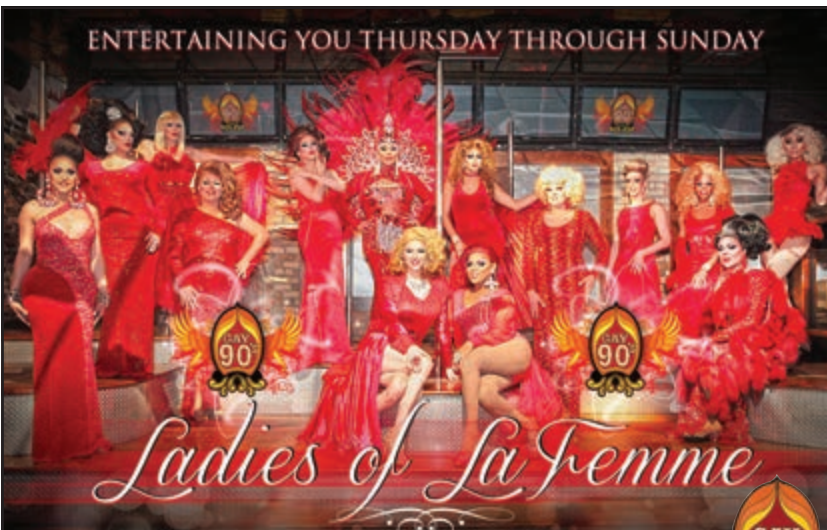
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Dan Savage

dildos in a box and send them somewhere, RRR, please make sure the address on the box doesn't read: Bundy Militia, c/o Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, 36391 Sodhouse Ln., Princeton, OR, 97721.

A few weeks ago, you answered a letter from *Seeks Discreet Call Service*, a woman in an open marriage who was having Tinder hookups in hotel rooms while traveling for work. She was concerned about her safety and wanted to have someone check in on her, but she couldn't tell her partner about

her hookups (DADT arrangement) or her friends (she's not out about her open marriage). She specifically asked if there was an app that might help, and you told her there wasn't an app for that. You were wrong, Dan! There are actually several apps. PCWorld published a roundup of a few of them a couple of years ago ("5 Personal Safety Apps That Watch Your Back," by Amber Bouman), and there's an app called Kitestring (kitestring.io) that has gotten some glowing reviews. The gist is that you use the app to set a timer, and when it goes off, you have to alert the app that you are okay. Otherwise, the app automatically contacts emergency services or a predetermined contact and lets them know you are in trouble at your location. So technology does have a solution for SDCS's problem!

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REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

Your question comes up frequently, RRR, and there really isn't a satisfactory answer.

In Seattle, where I live, a community tool bank recently opened in my neighborhood — but they don't collect and lend the kind of tools you're looking to donate. I've heard about dildo graveyards in other cities (spots in parks where people bury their used sex toys), but burying sex toys isn't environmentally responsible. And while high-quality dildos can be cleaned and safely reused, most people are pretty squeamish about the idea. Which is odd, considering that we routinely reuse actual cocks that have been enjoyed by others — so why not the fake ones?

But even if I can't tell you what to do with your dildos, RRR, I can tell you what not to do with them: Do not ship your used dildos to the anti-government militia currently occupying a federal wildlife refuge in rural Oregon. After militia members asked supporters to send them supplies — via the U.S. Postal Service — their spokesperson complained bitterly about all the dildos they were getting in the mail. So if you decide to put your used

Man, I really blew that response — so thanks to TECH and everyone else who clued me in to Kitestring, StaySafe, Watch Over Me, bSafe, and all the other apps out there that are exactly what SDCS was looking for.

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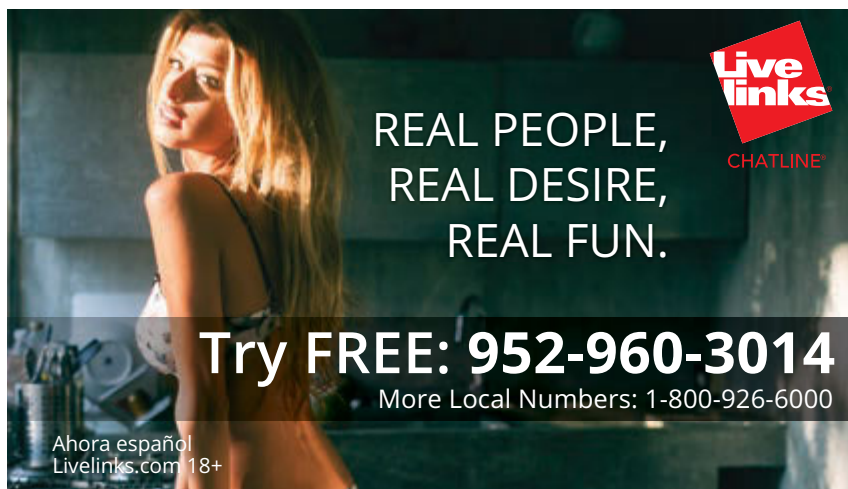
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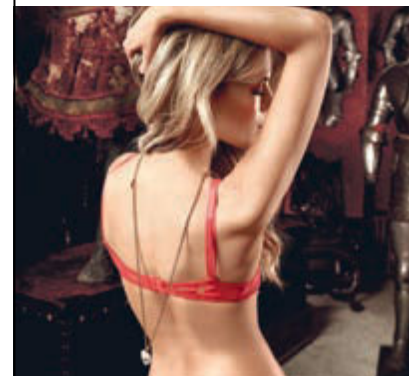
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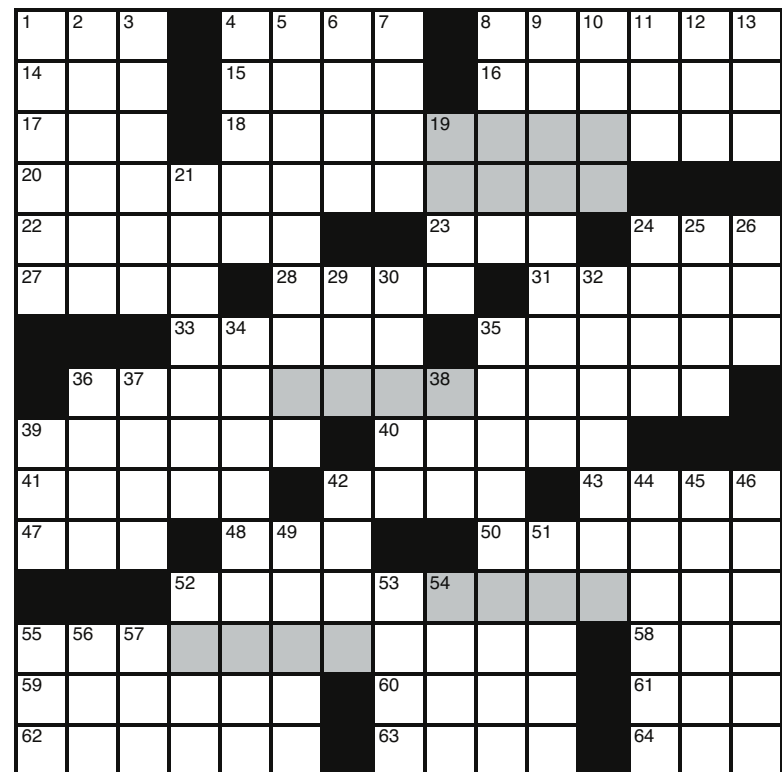
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Across

- 1 Directing word
- 4 Two-way
- 8 Triangular roof sections
- 14 Bus. letters
- 15 Haircut that's tough to wear a hat with
- 16 Stick in deeply
- 17 "Made for Moments" electronics company
- 18 Berry Gordy Jr. pioneered it
- 20 Beach Boys song off "Pet Sounds"
- 22 Emphatic confirmation
- 23 Significant other
- 24 Spray in the kitchen
- 27 No. 2 stuff
- 28 "___ minute?"
- 31 Like a Bostonian's accent
- 33 Veep between Hubert and Gerald
- 35 Bunny's trail?
- 36 Food providers for the homebound
- 39 City near the Lebanon Mountains
- 40 Calls at sea
- 41 Like the verbs "buy" and "sell": Abbr.
- 42 Singer ___ Blacc
- 43 Women driver's org.
- 47 Zit head?
- 48 Plane that burned 2885 gallons of fuel an hour: Abbr.

- 50 Non-natives, to Hawaiians
- 52 Comedian who is the narrator on TV's "The Goldbergs"
- 55 Has a beneficial effect
- 58 Lemon in a lot
- 59 Country singer Ronnie
- 60 Bird that lives on cliffs
- 61 Landing no.
- 62 Polish change
- 63 Biblical verb with thou
- 64 Vegetarian bean

Down

- 1 "The Aeneid" author
- 2 Difficult to read
- 3 Maine national park
- 4 Curses
- 5 One who knows his saucers
- 6 Affected and then some
- 7 "Over there"
- 8 Kind of salami
- 9 Grading assistant
- 10 Super Smash ___
- 11 Bodybuilder Ferrigno
- 12 Long stretch
- 13 A busy person might pick one up: Abbr.
- 19 Minnesota Lynx league
- 21 "It's probable..."
- 24 Scripting language
- 25 Big name in laptops
- 26 Website with Outlook and Bing
- 29 Conquistador's loot

- 30 Of sound quality
- 32 Waits for one's time
- 34 Toils at it
- 35 Forces into an inadequate space
- 36 French mother
- 37 Erse land
- 38 "Name not ringing a bell"
- 39 Profession, casually
- 42 Forwarding letters
- 44 Comes in second
- 45 Trattoria dessert
- 46 Off the beaten path
- 49 Calls it quits
- 51 Strong point
- 52 "Look here"
- 53 Took in too much snow
- 54 His uncle was Caligula
- 55 War perimeter, briefly
- 56 Target of some divesting protesters
- 57 Chess rating system

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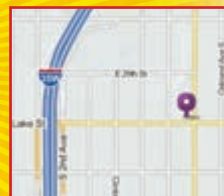
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